

DANISH TRADITIONS AND SUPERSTITIONS.

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THE ERL-MAIDEN AT EBELTOFT.

NOT far from Ebeltoft, as a country lad was watching the cattle, there came towards him a handsome maiden, who enquired whether he was hungry or thirsty. But perceiving that she was very careful not to let him see her back, he guessed at once that she was an erl-maiden ; for those beings are all hollow behind. He would therefore have nothing to say to her, and endeavoured to escape ; whereupon she produced her breast, and invited him to suck. There was so much sorcery in her voice and manner, that he could not resist ; but when he had done what she told him, he was no longer master of himself, and she had little difficulty in persuading him to go with her. He was missing three days, whilst his parents sat at home and sorrowed, for they concluded he had been beguiled, and never expected to see him more. On the fourth day, the father saw him coming afar off, and immediately commanded the mother to place a pot of meat upon the fire. The son very soon after entered the door, and seated himself silently by the table ; the parents likewise spoke not a word, but behaved just as if nothing had happened. At length, the victuals being ready, the mother placed them before her son, and the father told him to eat ; but the youth suffered the meat to stand untouched, and at last said that he now knew where to get much better food. The father was very wroth, and seizing a large heavy stick, again commanded him to eat. The son was forced to comply ; but when he had once tasted the meat, he devoured it with frightful greediness, and fell shortly afterwards into a deep slumber. He slept exactly as many days as he had staid away ; but he was never afterwards in his right senses.

SWEND TRUNSEN'S SONS.

Swend Trunsden had two sons, fine handsome men, and both of great importance in the kingdom. Eskild was a soldier, bold and daring, but haughty, cruel, and stained with the grossest vices. His brother Swend, on the contrary, was Bishop of Viborg, and a good and pious nobleman. Observing Eskild's evil disposition and daily misdeeds, he thought that such would bring him to no good end, and therefore entreated him in the most pressing manner, to reform, and to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. But Eskild would not consent, until his brother had promised to accompany him. Bishop Swend prepared himself for this fatiguing journey, rather than his brother, whom he tenderly loved, should fall into the claws of Satan. When they had reached the river Jordan, they went together into a little church, called Paternoster church, where they prayed, and then dipped themselves in the sacred flood. But just after they had received the sacrament, Eskild was seized with so violent a sickness, that he gave up the ghost on the spot. Bishop Swend was heartily rejoiced at this, because he considered it as a manifest sign of God's mercy, and his brother's salvation. He fell down upon his knees, and entreated God to take him also, because he had a great desire to follow his brother, and to share his happiness. His wish was granted ; for he almost immediately expired in the same place. The brothers were enshrined side by side in Paternoster church ; and whenever pilgrims visited the Holy Land from Denmark, they offered up their prayers there, and made presents to the church.

SIR ESKE BROCK.

As Sir Eske Brock, who lived at Vemmeltoft, once went through the fields cracking his whip, a hat suddenly

ly fell upon the ground before him ; he caused his servant to pick it up, and then placed it on his own head. But no sooner was it there, than he became invisible ; he then tried it on the servants, and whoever wore the hat, was seen by none of the others. The knight was overjoyed at his prize, and carried it home with him. Presently a bareheaded boy came to the gate, and desired to speak to Sir Eske Brock, and when the latter appeared, the boy asked him for his hat, which, he said, Sir Eske had just knocked off his head with his whip ; he offered him a hundred ducats, and afterwards a thousand, to restore it, but the knight refused to do this, knowing the value of the hat. At last, when the lad swore, that if Sir Eske would give him his hat again, none of the children which his newly-married wife might in future bear him should ever come to want, the nobleman restored it, thinking that he was well paid by such a promise. But when the lad went from the gate, he said "It is true they shall never want food, money, or clothes, for they shall all be still-born." And so, indeed, it came to pass, for all the children Sir Eske's wife brought forth were dead before they saw the light, so that he died the last of his race.

SIGNELIL AND HABOR.

Near Ringsted lies Sigarsted, which takes its name from King Sigar, who dwelt there. His daughter Signelil loved Habor, a warrior ; and the spot is shewn, near Alsted, where the lovers used to meet. It is now called "Signelil's walk." Once, when she and her father were out hunting, they pursued a stag across the stream of Vangstrup, where her horse fell be-

neath her, and her life was in great danger ; but Habor coming up at the critical moment, plunged into the water and saved her. Their mutual tenderness was at length carried to such a pitch, that Habor, disguised as a maid servant waited upon Signelil, and lay with her every night ; but Gunvare, Signelil's nurse and confidante, betrayed the whole proceeding to King Sigar. All now being discovered, and Habor being seized by the king's men, the two lovers vowed to die together. Habor was led forth to the "Gallows-hill," in order to be hanged ; but, just before his death, he felt a desire to put Signelil's fidelity to the proof ; and he therefore entreated the executioners, that before they dispatched him, they would hoist his cloak upon the gallows, so that he might thereby see how he himself would hang. In the mean time, Signelil cast all her valuables into a deep pit, which is now called Signelil's well ; and whence arises the saying, that Sigarsted has more gold and silver in it than it knows of. She then locked herself in her bower, and fixed her eyes upon the gallows on which Habor was to be hanged. But when she saw the mantle, she set fire to her bower, in the belief that Habor was already dead ; and when the bower and Signelil were burning, Habor, who was convinced of her love, allowed himself to be executed. He was afterwards buried in the height of Hage. But the accursed nurse reaped the just reward of her treachery ; for Sigar, considering her to be the cause of his daughter's death, caused her to be placed in a barrel of spikes, and rolled down the Gallows-hill.